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ABSTRACT

The Unit for Advanced Studies in Modern Swedish (FUMS) at Uppsala University has one of the largest collections of spontaneous present-day spoken Swedish and has housed many sociolinguistic research projects since the 1960s. The four studies generating the most empirical data are on: The Urban Dialect of Eskilstuna; The Child's Linguistic Identification; Language, Roles, and Social Relations; and Town and Hinterland: Urbanization and Language. Despite their different areas of study, all four projects have attempted to describe sociolinguistic variation and identify its causes at the phonological and morphological levels. All have found considerable inter- and intra-individual variation at the structural levels examined and support the idea that this variation is greater in informal than formal situations. In turn, they have reinforced the importance of studying impromptu speech. (MSE)

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REPORTS ON SWEDISH PROJECTS RELEVANT TO THE STUDY OF IMPROMPTU SPEECH

II. FUMS

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II. FUMS

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One of the largest collections of spontaneous present-day spoken Swedish is kept at the Unit for Advanced Studies in Modern Swedish (Avdelningen för forskning och utbildning i modern svenska – FUMS) at Uppsala University. Since the mid-1960s a large number of sociolinguistic research projects have been carried on at the Unit, most of them focusing on various types of impromptu speech.[1] The four projects which have generated most empirical data, and on which this survey will concentrate, are
1. The Urban Dialect of Eskilstuna, 2. The Child's Linguistic Identification, 3. Language, Roles and Social Relations, 4. Town and Hinterland: Urbanisation and Language.

The order of magnitude of these studies is indicated by the following figures:

1. 83 informants, 53 hours of recording
2. 85 informants, 78 hours of recording
3. 56 informants, 32 hours of recording
4. 120 informants, 53 hours of recording

The 78 hours recorded for project 2 include data which cannot be classed as impromptu speech (reading aloud and a formalised communication game), and projects 2, 3 and 4 also include other types of data (test results and answers to questionnaires).

The term 'impromptu' can probably be taken to refer primarily to certain properties of the discourse structure of speech such as turn-taking, corrections, the use of pauses, and cooperative devices. The four projects have not, however, been primarily concerned with linguistic research into phenomena

[1] These projects have chiefly been financed by the Swedish Council for Research in the Humanities and Social Sciences and the Bank of Sweden Tercentenary Foundation.

of this kind, even if most of the data in fact lend themselves very well to such investigation. Our attention has chiefly been focused on smaller segmental units, in particular phonological and morphological units. The overriding purpose of the projects is to describe, and bring to light the underlying causes of, sociolinguistic variation at these levels. Varying in design and involving different situations and groups of informants as they do, the projects are intended to complement one another and provide a well-rounded picture of patterns of linguistic variation.

The data collected for project 1, The Urban Dialect of Eskilstuna, consist of informal interviews – or, to use a more appropriate French term, *conversations dirigées* – between the investigator and one informant at a time. The informants represent the entire social spectrum, and they were 15 years of age or older when the recordings were made (1967-68). Only native residents of Eskilstuna were included. Eskilstuna is a medium-sized industrial town in Central Sweden, 120 km west of Stockholm.

Project 2, The Child's Linguistic Identification, also gathers its material from Eskilstuna and is to a certain extent based on the results of the earlier investigation there. The informants, however, are school children aged from 7 to 16, recorded over three successive years, thus covering the first to the ninth year of the elementary comprehensive school. The aim of the project is to investigate to what extent the linguistic behaviour of the child can be taken as symptomatic of its gradually growing social identification during (pre-adolescence and) adolescence. It is also suggested that an increasing awareness of the sociolinguistic rules regarding situationally appropriate variants is manifested in continuously growing stylistic variability over the years. That part of the empirical data which consists of recorded speech was collected in four situations with varying degrees of formality: reading aloud (individually), a formalised communication game (in dyads), a card game and a free discussion (in groups of four). The same situations were repeated during each of the recording years from 1977 to 1979.

The third project, Language, Roles and Social Relations, centres on Burträsk, a small community in the north of Sweden, where data were collected in 1973-74. In many respects this project is a contrast and a complement to the Eskilstuna project. Situational variation is here of major concern, while the Eskilstuna recordings are situationally uniform; in Eskilstuna the socio-economic spectrum is rather wide, while Burträsk is a much more egalitarian community; Eskilstuna speech lies relatively close to standard Swedish, which

has developed from the central dialects, while dialectal speech in Burträsk finds itself at a considerable linguistic distance from the standard; variation in Eskilstuna can best be thought of as gradual and continuous,while one could expect to find a more radical code-switch in Burträsk with a lot of variables involved in simultaneous variation. And finally, in Burträsk the data are drawn, not from individual informal interviews, but from recorded sessions with open and closed groups, where each recording comprises two phases, one when the group talks on its own and another in the presence of an outsider introduced as a social scientist. Some of the speakers were also interviewed formally.

While projects 1 and 3 – an virtually 2 also – operate exclusively with natives of the communities concerned, project no 4, Town and Hinterland: Urbanisation and Language, has focused on the majority of adult town dwellers, viz. the migrants. To what extent do migrants change their language after moving, and if they do, do they change in the direction of the local dialect of their new place of residence or in the direction of the standard language? What is the relationship between the migrants' linguistic modification and their social adjustment? Do long- and short-distance migrants modify their speech along the same lines? These are some of the questions we want the project to answer.

The areas selected for investigation are the cities of Eskilstuna and Skellefteå, as immigration centres, and rural areas of northern Västerbotten and north-west Södermanland, as emigration areas. Three different migrant groups are being studied, namely short-distance migrants from rural Västerbotten to Skellefteå, short-distance migrants from rural Södermanland to Eskilstuna, and long-distance migrants from rural Västerbotten to Eskilstuna. In addition there are four control groups consisting of people born and still living in the four regions under study.

The corpus of the project consists of telephone interviews which were carried out in the winter of 1978-79. Quite apart from its economic advantages,this procedure also successfully induced the informants to talk freely in reply to the standardised questions.

On the structural level we have chosen to study, the impromptu character of the material is brought out mainly by the extensive variation in linguistic expression. This variation is not only inter-individual but also intra-individual. There are very few informants with a categorical use of one variant even within the same speech situation and in identical linguistic contexts. This seems to

suggest that the variation, at least in Central Sweden, is quantitative in character and continuous over speaker groups. In the Burträsk material a slightly different pattern emerges.

In the urban language of Eskilstuna, variation according to social class assumes the expected pattern with the higher social strata conforming more closely to the standard norm. Age variation exhibits an interesting detail which has also emerged in other Swedish sociolinguistic surveys. By and large it is the second youngest age group, people approximately 25-40 years old, who adhere most closely to the prestige norm. Probably this has to do with changing identification from the smaller local group to a larger nation-wide community, and this is also the age of social ambition and aspirations of a higher social position. Now this pattern is not uncommon for stable sociolinguistic variables, but here it can also be discerned in variables undergoing change.

As for sex differentiation it is true that on the whole women are more favourably disposed to prestigious forms, but this is the result of two opposing tendencies. It is women in the upper and middle social classes and younger women who represent this well-documented trend, but older women and women in the lower social classes favour the local non-standard forms more than do men in comparable subgroups. The explanation of this reversal, I think, is to be found in the changing social role of women today.

In terms of linguistic change, both of the two well-known patterns *change from above* and *change from below* are borne out. And it is worth noticing that it is the morphological variables (e.g. past participle ("supinum") of verbs of the 2nd conj *t* ~ *i*) that follow the pattern of change from above, where the difference in speech forms is equivalent to a dissimilarity between the traditional form of the regional spoken language and the orthography of the written language. By way of contrast we can witness change from below in some phonological variables (e.g. (ö:) and (ʉ:)) where the changing pronunciation does not come into conflict with the spelling but where the change involves a partial restructuring of the vowel system.

The diachronic changes suggested by the Eskilstuna study all take place in apparent time. The fact that some of the same variables are being investigated in the project The Child's Linguistic Identification makes it possible to ascertain whether these changes are also taking place in real time. A comparison has been made of the behaviour of one such variable, the realisation

of the singular definite form of neuter nouns (*t* ~ ø). It turns out that both trends observed in the first investigation are confirmed by the second: a long-term, continuous development towards the *t* form of the standard language, along with a marked contrast in every generation between the clearly more local norm of school children and young people and the more standard norm of adults. This variable also indicates that children are sensitive to situational requirements from an early age. Stylistic variation between the freer and more controlled situations is marked, in junior classes just as much as in the senior years of the school. The phonological variables (1), (ö:) and (ä:) behave in closer agreement with the hypothesis that stylistic differentiation increases with the increasing age of informants. In the informal situations these variables show a higher incidence of local dialect variants among pupils in the higher years of the school, whereas in the more formal contexts they move closer to the standard language or else remain unchanged throughout children's school careers.

In the rural community of Burträsk in northern Sweden, variation assumes a somewhat different pattern. Despite relatively wide intra-situational variation in individual speakers, it is possible, by introducing a measurement of co-occurrence, to unearth what can be termed a relative code-switch. The twelve linguistic variables studied, each with a dialect variant (D) and a standard variant (S), can be divided into a set of dialect indicators (DI) and a set of standard indicators (SI). When changing from an informal to a more formal situation most speakers alternate, on the whole, according to one of the following patterns.

Speaker group 1				Speaker group 2			
Situation A		Situation B		Situation A		Situation B	
DI	: D ------->	DI	: S	DI	: S ------->	DI	: S
SI	: D ------->	SI	: D	SI	: D ------->	SI	: S

This results in three different varieties made up as follows:

1 = DI : D + SI : D
2 = DI : S + SI : D
3 = DI : S + SI : S

These varieties may be termed dialect, regional standard and standard respectively. Depending on social factors like age, education and place of of birth (centre or periphery), nearly all Burträskers respond to a shift in situation either by adhering to the same speech variety throughout both situations or by alternating between 1 and 2 or between 2 and 3, but almost never between varieties 1 and 3.

At the present stage of work on Urbanisation and Language, no definite conclusions can be drawn concerning the project's prime objective, viz. to correlate the changes arising in migrants' language with their social adjustment to their new place of residence. Certain trends in the linguistic behaviour of migrants can, however, be discerned by examining individual variables. These variables are chosen and delimited in such a way that for every instance of a variable it must be possible to tell whether the informant has changed his language on this point or not and, if he has, whether in the direction of the new local norm or the standard language. It would appear, firstly, that long- and short-distance migrants behave differently and, secondly, that whether they change and if so in what direction depends on which variable is being considered. Short-distance migrants adapt to a large extent to the urban language, even where it diverges from the standard (e.g. the pronunciation of *ö:* in Eskilstuna). The guiding principle of long-distance migrants, on the other hand, appears to be to avoid conspicuous dialect features whether they belong to the dialect of their original or their new place of residence. Thus people moving from Västerbotten to Eskilstuna abandon almost entirely the *ø*-ending form of the present tense of strong and 2nd conjugation weak verbs (e.g. *köp*) in favour of the longer forms of Eskilstuna speech and standard Swedish (e.g. *köper*). They do not, however, adopt the Eskilstuna past participle forms of 2nd conjugation verbs ending in *i* (*köpi*), but retain the forms existing in their original dialect and standard Swedish (*köpt*). In the case of another variable they show, as a group, a higher frequency of standard forms than natives of either Västerbotten or Södermanland still resident there (preterite of 1st conjugation verbs *-ade* as against *-a*). As regards lexical provincialisms, basically the same trend can be made out, i.e. long-distance migrants lose more of their original language than they assimilate from the language of their new environment.

The investigations described here bear witness to considerable inter- and intraindividual variation at the structural levels examined. Many other studies

provide support for the claim that this kind of variation is greater in informal than in formal situations. It is, therefore, of no little importance from what type of discourse the empirical data to be studied are drawn. This is then, in sum, the relevance of the projects presented to the study of impromptu speech.

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